

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2089

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 0068

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, ES, HO

SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER BATRES COMMENTS ON CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR'S

STATE OF UNION ADDRESS AND APPOINTMENT OF NEW FONMIN

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 0010

BEGIN SUMMARY: PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER BATRES TOLD POLOFF ON JANUARY 6 THAT HE HAD WRITTEN CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR'S STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS. HE SAID THAT ITS MOST IMPORTANT SECTION CONCERNED THE SETTING UP OF AN ADVISORY COUNCIL IN PREPARATION FOR A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONALITY AND FREE ELECTIONS. BATRES ALSO SAID THAT THE SECTION ON AGRARIAN REFORM WAS THE OTHER IMPORTANT PART AND AIMED AT ASSURING THE CAMPESINO ORGANIZATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DESIRE TO PRESS FOR AGRARIAN REFORM WHILE AT THE SAME TIME ASSURING THE PRIVATE SECTOR THAT IT IS NOT IN AN INSECURE POSITION. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD RESIGN AS A NEGOTIATOR IN THE HONDURAS-EL SALVADOR TALKS IF HE AND NEWLY-NAMED FONMIN PERDOMO DO NOT HAVE SIMILAR VIEWS OF THE TALKS. END
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SUMMARY.

1. POLOFF CALLED ON PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER BATRES JANUARY 6. BATRES STATED THAT HE HAD WRITTEN THE STATE OF UNION ADDRESS. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT SECTION CONCERNED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ADVISORY COUNCIL WHICH WOULD ADVISE THE GOVERNMENT ON THE STEPS NECESSARY TO RETURN THE COUNTRY TO CONSTITUTIONAL RULE. HE SAID THAT A GROUP IN THE SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL (SDC) HAD WANTED TO SET A SPECIFIC DATE FOR A RETURN TO FREE ELECTIONS. BATRES SAID THAT HE WAS SUPPORTED BY ANOTHER GROUP IN THE SDC IN HIS ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH A MORE FLEXIBLE AND INDEFINITE TIMETABLE. HE POINTED OUT THAT A THREE YEAR PERIOD IS REASONABLE, GIVEN THE MULTITUDE OF PROBLEMS CONFRONTING HONDURAS AND REMARKED THAT THE SETTING OF A DATE WOULD HAVE HAD THE EFFECT OF CREATING IMMEDIATE POLITICAL PRESSURES DIRECTED AT THAT EXACT DATE.

2. BATRES SAID THAT THE NEW ADVISORY COUNCIL WOULD BE COMPOSED OF APPROXIMATELY 30 MEMBERS WHO WOULD BE SELECTED FROM THE POLITICAL PARTIES, PRIVATE SECTOR, LABOR UNIONS, CAMPESINO ORGANIZATIONS, TEACHERS ASSOCIATIONS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CHIEF OF STATE. HE REMARKED THAT CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR WILL BE IN COMMUNICATION WITH THE VARIOUS SECTORS IN THE COMING WEEK TO OBTAIN THEIR VIEWS ON HOW THE ADVISORY COUNCIL SHOULD BE SET UP AND HOW IT SHOULD FUNCTION. HE SAID THAT NO GOVERNMENT DECISION HAD BEEN TAKEN ON THE COMPOSITION OR ORGANIZATION OF THE COUNCIL.

3. BATRES EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE COUNCIL WOULD DEVELOP INTO A "LITTLE CONGRESS" WHICH WOULD BE ABLE TO OFFER ADVICE FROM ALL SOCIAL SECTORS TO THE GOVERNMENT ON IMPORTANT ISSUES. HE OBSERVED THAT ONE OF THE FAULTS OF THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ITS LACK OF COMMUNICATION WITH VARIOUS SECTORS OF HONDURAN SOCIETY. HE COMMENTED THAT, HOPEFULLY, THE COUNCIL WOULD BE AN "ESCAPE VALVE" FOR THE SOCIETY.

4. HE SAID THAT THE OTHER IMPORTANT POINT IN THE SPEECH WAS THE EMPHASIS PLACED ON THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION TO CARRY OUT AGRARIAN REFORM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAW. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE SPEECH ALSO OFFERED THE PRIVATE SECTOR THE PROMISE OF SECURITY IN ITS INVESTMENTS AND BUSINESS ACTIVITIES.

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HE OBSERVED THAT ITS INTENTION WAS TO ASSURE THE CAMPESINO GROUPS THAT AGRARIAN REFORM IS CENTRAL TO THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM, BUT AT THE SAME TIME TO ASSURE THE PRIVATE SECTOR THAT IT IS NOT IN AN INSECURE POSITION AND ENJOYS THE FULL PROTECTION OF THE LAW.

5. AS REPORTED SEPTTEL, BATRES STATED THAT HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE APPOINTMENT OF ROBERTO PERDOMO PAREDES AS THE NEW

FONMIN. BATRES REMARKED THAT HE IS UNSURE OF FONMIN PERDOMO'S POSITION IN REGARD TO THE IMPENDING HONDURAN-EL SALVADOR TALKS, AND STATED THAT HE WOULD RESIGN IF THEY CANNOT AGREE ON THE ALREADY APPROVED NEGOTIATION PROCESS UTILIZING THE MEDIATION FORMULA. HE SAID THAT THE MEETING SCHEDULED FOR MIAMI THIS WEEK HAD BEEN POSTPONED, BUT MAY

TAKE PLACE DURING THE WEEK OF JANUARY 12-18.

6. COMMENT: BATRES APPEARS TO BE CONVINCED THAT THE FORMATION OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL OFFERS THE BEST FEASIBLE METHOD TO BRING ABOUT A NATIONAL DIALOGUE AIMED AT A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT. HE BELIEVES THAT IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE FOR THE COUNCIL TO HAVE A BENEFICIAL EFFECT IN SUPPLYING THE GOVERNMENT WITH OPINIONS ON POLICIES OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE IN ALL AREAS. HE RECOGNIZES THAT THE COUNCIL COULD BE A FAILURE, BUT THINKS THAT THE ADVANTAGES OF CREATING SUCH A BODY AT THIS TIME OUTWEIGH ITS POTENTIAL DRAWBACKS. DURING THE NEXT THREE-YEAR PERIOD THE GOVERNMENT CAN CONCENTRATE ON IMPLEMENTING THE ALREADY ENACTED REFORM MEASURES WITHOUT BEING UNDER CONSTANT ATTACK FOR BEING UNCONSTITUTIONAL. THE PERIOD ALSO OFFERS THE VARIOUS SECTORS OF SOCIETY THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP A PROCESS FOR A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONALITY THAT WOULD BE MORE TRULY REPRESENTATIVE THAN IN THE PAST.
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